

# April 2018 - Vol.4 No. 4



# Table of Contents

- OMG! What’s Eating the Broccoli?** ..... 1
- The Ornamental Garden in April** ..... 7
- Blue in the Shade** ..... 12
- Choosing the Right Trees for Your Yard** ..... 20
- In The Vegetable Garden – April** ..... 25
- Upcoming Events – April 9: Lecture by Cole Burrell. May 5: Annual Plant Sale** ..... 29
- Baby Bok Choy, Sautéed and Steamed** ..... 32

# OMG! What's Eating the Broccoli?

By Ralph Morini | April 2018 - Vol.4 No. 4



There is nothing more demoralizing to a gardener than to lose your ready-to-be-picked produce to a sneaky pest. Cabbage family (also known as Brassicae or Cole) crops, including many popular vegetables like cabbage, kale, broccoli, collards, brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, cauliflower and others, are subject to damage, mainly from a variety of caterpillars. Luckily, there are both cultural and insecticidal practices that can help control the damage.

## The Pests

In Virginia, there are three major and several less-common culprits, all larval stages of various moth species that target cabbage family crops. The most common are the imported cabbage worm, the cabbage looper, and the diamondback moths. I would like to include a fourth, the cross-striped cabbage worm, because it is particularly problematic for me. These pests are often called “cabbage worms” even though they are actually caterpillars. While each has its unique characteristics, they share a common cycle and development process. The moths lay their eggs on the plants, typically on the leaves, singly or in clusters. Small caterpillars hatch in a few days and grow larger and change color as they feed. First, they create translucent windows in leaves, progressing to eating large holes as they grow. This stage lasts 2-3 weeks, then the worms enter a cocoon. During the warm seasons pupation lasts for about 10 days and a new cycle begins. The entire cycle lasts 4-5 weeks and there can be several overlapping generations each year. The pupae overwinter in plant debris and initiate the next season’s cycle in the spring. Rumors that fall crops suffer less from these pests are not accurate. They remain active and destructive up to the first killing frost.

The imported cabbage worm is probably the most conspicuous in the adult stage because it is active during the day. Young larvae are, on the other hand, hard to spot because they are tiny and green like the host

plant.



*Imported cabbage worm adult*  
David Cappert, Bugwood.org



*Imported cabbage worm eggs*  
W Cranshaw, Bugwood.org



*Imported cabbage worm larva*  
*The Pest Caterpillars of Cole Crops in VA:*  
[www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu)

The earliest arrival in central Virginia, or at least in my garden, is the cross-striped cabbage worm. They lay larger numbers of eggs and small “worms” seem to appear everywhere at once in mid- to late May. Their mixed colors may make them easier to spot than some others, but once they arrive, they are prolific and signal the start of the long fight ahead. They are typically found on the underside of leaves. Here is what they look like on my kale a few days after hatching.



*Cross-striped cabbage worm larva on kale leaf*

### **The Damage**

Just hatched larvae are tiny miners that create windowpanes in leaves. As they grow, they eat progressively bigger holes in leaves, leaving only veins if left unchecked. They can also bore into heads, doing more than surface damage to head crops.



*Windowpane damage from Diamond Back Moth  
Wallingford, Kuhar and Schultz, Dept of Entomology,  
VA Tech, Blacksburg, VA.*



*Typical leaf holes from maturing worms  
Charlotte Glen, NC State Extension*

### **Cultural Controls**

For the backyard gardener, there are a number of low impact practices that help reduce the chances of major crop damage:

- Rotating cole crops in the garden, repeating specific locations on a 3-year or longer cycle.
- Because pupae overwinter in soil and plant debris, remove and dispose of dead or damaged plant matter during and after the season
- Interplanting, creating small patches or rows of specific crops and mixing them with other

plants, reduces the risk of a single major infestation.

- Thinning overcrowded and weaker plants, creates a healthier crop that is easier to visually manage.
- Encouraging predators can help. Create a favorable environment for worm-eating birds by providing shelter, nesting material and water. Encourage, or at least don't harm, predatory insects including certain beetles, yellowjackets, green lacewings, and parasitic wasps.
- Regular observation of plants is important. Watching for the moths can sound the alarm in time to head off major damage. Regularly checking plants for signs of infestation such as eggs, windowpanes and leaf holes, allows gardeners to intervene before too much damage is done.
- Hand-picking larvae off plants can be effective, especially on smaller plots. Drop them into a jar of soapy water and pour boiling water over them, or if, like me, you need an emotional release as you save your crop from invaders, squish them between your thumb and forefinger as you search for the next victim. These measures are minimally invasive and are smart practices for everyone. However, they are all focused on damage minimization, implicitly accepting a certain amount of destruction. A practice that is more focused on damage prevention is the use of floating row covers. They provide a mechanical barrier that allows sunlight and rain to reach plants but prevents moths from reaching them to lay their eggs. They require some up-front work to set up, but are insecticide free and eliminate the daily need to inspect and remove pests all summer long. They can be constructed simply and inexpensively and deserve consideration. Because we eat the roots and leaves of cabbage family plants, pollination is not necessary and row covers don't harm yield. A short summary of floating row cover construction and installation is included at the end of this article.



*Example of hoop supported floating row covers  
Getting started in the Vegetable Garden, Karen Delahut:  
[www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu).*

## **Organic Insecticides**

If non-chemical measures don't suit you or aren't effective enough, there are multiple insecticide options available for controlling cabbage worms.

*Bacillus Thuringiensis* (Bt), is a naturally-occurring, spore-forming soil bacterium. It produces proteins that aggregate into crystals and are toxic when consumed by the larvae of many insect species. *Bacillus*

*thuringiensis* subsp. *kurstaki* (Btk), and subsp. *aizawai* are the specific varieties that are used as pesticides for cabbage pests. Bt's great benefit is its specificity. It is harmful only to the targeted larva and does not affect other insects. It must be sprayed on the portion of the plants, typically the leaves, where the larvae feed, and at the time when they are feeding. It doesn't kill instantly but stops them from eating immediately and kills them in 1 to 2 days. It breaks down quickly in the environment, specifically in UV light, and must be reapplied every 3-5 days. It is an organic pesticide because it is found naturally in soils around the world. It has no known harmful effects on humans, although carefully following label directions, as with any insecticide, is important.

While Bt is probably the least toxic insecticide option available, there are other organic options. They include Spinosad, which doesn't break down as fast as Bt, so doesn't need to be reapplied as often. Its drawback is that it is not as selective and can cause harm to other insects that eat treated plant parts. Other organic insecticide active ingredients that are applicable to cabbage worms include pyrethrins and neem oil. Read label directions carefully to be sure you choose a product that fits your needs and preferences.

## **Synthetic Insecticides**

There are also synthetic insecticides appropriate for at least a part of our target larvae population. Active ingredients include permethrin, bifenthrin, cyfluthrin and esfenvalerate. Some Diamondback moth populations have developed resistance, so read labels carefully before making a selection. Advantages of synthetics include faster killing and longer viability in the environment. Drawbacks are higher toxicity generally and damage to beneficial insects. Pay special attention to the pre-harvest interval on the label. Harvest produce at the end of the interval to minimize residual chemicals in the produce you eat.

## **Floating Row Covers: A Non-Chemical Preventive Solution**

Floating row covers are mentioned above as one of several cultural measures that can reduce cabbage worm damage. They require some time and effort to build, but overall are less work than picking and squashing and are more organic than spraying. And they work.

There are any number of ways to make floating row covers. A simple method is to use  $\frac{3}{4}$ " flexible PVC tubing to make a hoop to span the bed to be protected. Cut the tubing to a length that allows it to span the bed at a height that clears the plants. Create stakes out of  $\frac{1}{2}$ " steel rebar, about 16" long. Drive them 8" deep into the ground and leave 8" showing above ground. Slide the tubing over the rebar on two sides of the bed, creating a radial hoop. Place hoops every few feet along your row or bed. Then cover the set of hoops with an insect resistant spun polyester fabric and anchor the fabric to the hoops and the ground to keep the insects out. It can be fastened to the hoops by making clips out of old garden hose slit lengthwise and slid around the hoops on top and sides. Secure the fabric to the ground with dirt, rocks/bricks, or longer pieces of wood, rebar or other material with enough weight to hold the fabric down. The proper fabric lets light and water through while keeping insects out. It also moderates temperature, shading plants on hot days and holding some heat

in cooler weather.

Once set up, row covers spare gardeners the daily inspection chore, preserve prettier produce, and eliminate the risk of a guest finding a caterpillar in their food. There is plenty of guidance about construction of floating row covers on the web. [Here is a link that I found helpful.](#)

## **And a Hail Mary**

Finally, a plausible but personally unproven method that may be of interest. Cabbage moths are territorial. When a moth sees that another of its species has beaten it to its intended target, it looks for another place to lay its eggs. No less a professional than the master vegetable gardener at a major area historical attraction, hangs imported cabbage moth decoys over her cole crops and claims good success at preventing infestations. [Here is a link to an article with step by step instructions.](#) It is simple, cheap, organic and worth a try.

## **It's About Balance**

If you are a backyard gardener aiming for low environmental impact and minimal chemical solutions to gardening issues, there are plenty of non-chemical ways to preserve your cabbage family crops. If you are more inclined to take the chemical-based route, they exist too. Or, as my mom once said to my sister, referring to the cabbage worm she found in the cole slaw, "It's mostly cabbage anyway; what are you worried about?"

### **Sources:**

"The pest caterpillars of cole crops in Virginia," [www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/pdf](http://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/pdf)

"Imported Cabbageworm in Home Gardens," [pubs.ext.vt.edu/ENTO-253.pdf](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/ENTO-253.pdf)

"Cabbage Looper," [pubs.ext.vt.edu//3104-1544/ENTO-244NP.pdf](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu//3104-1544/ENTO-244NP.pdf)

"Diamondback Moth in Virginia," [pubs.ext.vt.edu//444-007](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu//444-007)

NC State Cooperative Extension: Controlling Caterpillars in Vegetable Gardens, Charlotte Glen, <https://pender.ces.ncsu.edu/2013/09/controlling-caterpillars-in-vegetable-gardens/>

NC State Cooperative Extension: Good Bug/Bad Bug, Charlotte Glen, <https://pender.ces.ncsu.edu/2011/05/good-bug-bad-bug/>

# The Ornamental Garden in April

By Susan Martin | April 2018 - Vol.4 No. 4

April in Virginia is the party month for gardeners! It's like putting up the holiday decorations with no thought of putting them away, or getting ready for a party with no thought of washing a mound of dirty dishes at the end. April is FUN! The ground is ready for working, the soil is getting warm enough for seeding, the perennials are showing lots of green, and there is an array of spring-blooming bulbs to enjoy while we're working in the yard. So, what's on our list of things to do?

- **Harden off seedlings** before planting in open ground to prevent transplant shock. Place them in a shady location initially and bring them indoors at night if temperatures are predicted to drop below 50°F. For advice on transplanting seedlings, see the Virginia Cooperative Extension article, "[Plant Propagation from Seed.](#)"
- **Transplant** on a shady day in late afternoon or in early evening. Water with a half-strength fertilizer solution.
- When transplanting seedlings in **peat pots**, break away the uppermost rim of the pot before planting and make sure the pot is completely covered with soil. If the rim is above the soil level, it will act as a wick and draw moisture away from the transplant.
- **Sow seeds directly outside** after checking planting directions on seed packets. For example, some seeds should not be planted until after the last frost; some can be planted 1-2 weeks before the last average frost date.
- As a general rule, **divide late-summer or fall-blooming perennials in spring**. This includes most ornamental grasses and plants such as asters, chrysanthemums, and canna lilies. Many perennials, however, can be divided in either spring or fall. For a list of perennial division recommendations, see the Virginia Cooperative Extension article, "[Dividing Perennials.](#)"
- If a frost is forecast, **protect tender new growth** with row covers, old sheets, cardboard, or even layers of newspaper. Remove the coverings the next morning to prevent "cooking" your plants as the day warms up.
- **Fertilize spring-flowering bulbs** after they finish blooming. An organic fertilizer especially formulated for bulbs is a good choice.
- **Remove faded flowers from daffodils, tulips and hyacinths, letting the foliage die naturally.** Don't braid or tie up the foliage since this could interfere with photosynthesis for food production. **If your daffodils have become crowded and aren't producing as many flowers as in past years, they need to be divided.** Mark the location of the clump with a golf tee, plastic knife, or wooden stick so that you can find it later in the summer after the foliage has died back. Make a note to **dig up and separate the bulbs in July.**
- Winter mulches should be removed from **roses** by mid-April. Complete pruning promptly and cultivate lightly with compost. Remove only dead wood from climbers.
- **Set out summer-flowering bulbs, such as gladiolus and crocosmia.**
- **Move your houseplants outside** once night-time temperatures consistently stay at 50° F. or higher. Repot any root-bound plants into slightly larger pots. Fertilize with a slow-release fertilizer. Place the plants in a shady area initially so that they can gradually acclimate to being outside.
- **Mount a rain gauge** on a post or in the ground so that you can track precipitation. Most gardens need about one inch of rain per week between April and September.

For other April to-do lists, see *The Garden Shed* past issues from [2015](#), [2016](#) and [2017](#).

## FLOWERING SHRUBS

April in Virginia offers a beautiful pallet of white, yellow, lilac, and a range of pinks, from ballet pink to magenta. The woods are filled with graceful sprays of dogwoods and redbuds. There are also so many flowering shrubs that shout SPRING!! Look around and see which shrubs you'd like to add to your own landscape. Remember, all of these plants should be pruned and fertilized **AFTER** blooming, so keep the pruners handy while you're enjoying the bloom of the ones already growing in your landscape.



*Forsythia x intermedia*: Hedwig Storch, Wikimedia Commons



*Jasminum nudiflorum*: Wikimedia Commons

**Forsythia's** sunny yellow blooms persist for several weeks from March to April and are used by many as a timing device for when to apply spring lawn fertilizers and pre-emergent weed preventers. *Forsythia x intermedia* is commonly called border forsythia; *F. suspensa* is known as weeping forsythia. **Note: Winter jasmine, *Jasminum nudiflorum*, is often mistaken for forsythia** because of its bright yellow flowers that appear in February.

**Both azaleas and rhododendrons** belong to the genus *Rhododendron*, and cover a range of bloom times from early spring to early summer. See the May 2015 *Garden Shed* article, "[What's So Special About Azaleas and Rhododendrons?](#)"

***Camellia japonica*** and most of its cultivars are considered to be winter hardy to USDA Zones 7-9. In the northern part of its growing range, including Virginia, blooms appear in April. Flower colors are most commonly white, pink, or red with yellow anthers.

***Chaenomeles speciosa***, commonly called flowering quince, is a dense deciduous shrub with often-tangled, spiny, gray-brown twigs. Scarlet to red (less frequently pink or white) five-petaled flowers bloom before the leaves fully unfold in an often showy early spring bloom (late March-April). Flowers are followed by hard, dot-speckled, edible, yellowish-green fruits (2.5" quinces).

***Deutzia gracilis***, commonly called slender deutzia, is a dense, rounded, deciduous shrub that produces tiny, fragrant, bell-shaped, flowers. Consider covering the shrub if a hard frost is predicted. 'Chardonnay Pearls' is a patented plant best noted for its lemon-lime foliage and profuse bloom of fragrant white flowers in May.

***Fothergilla gardenii*** (dwarf fothergilla) is a slow-growing multi-stemmed shrub that grows 1.5-2' tall with white, bottlebrush-like flowers in April and very showy fall foliage. ***F.***



**major**, commonly called large fothergilla, tall fothergilla or mountain witch alder, grows 6-10' tall, and is noted for its aromatic white flowers in April, quality summer foliage, and excellent fall color. See the November 2017 *Garden Shed* article, "[Fothergilla - An Outstanding Choice for Fall Color.](#)"

*Deutzia gracilis*: [Wikimedia commons](#)

***Spiraea prunifolia***, commonly called bridalwreath spirea, is an upright, clumping, deciduous shrub that typically grows 4-8' tall and is particularly noted for its early spring bloom of double white flowers that appear in April. (*Spiraea japonica*, commonly called Japanese spirea, blooms in late spring to mid-summer with flat-topped clusters of tiny pink flowers.)

***Syringa meyeri***, commonly called Meyer lilac or Korean lilac, grows to about 4-5' tall and has pale lilac to violet-purple fragrant flowers that bloom in small, dense terminal clusters (panicles to 3-4" long) in late April to early May. *Syringa pubescens* subsp. *patula*, 'Miss Kim' is a compact, upright cultivar which grows 4-7' tall with a similar spread. Lavender to ice blue, sweetly fragrant, single flowers are arranged in dense, terminal clusters (panicles to 3' long) which cover this shrub in April-May. This is a good selection for southern climates.



**Viburnums** bloom in the last part of April through early May. Viburnums vary in their height, spread, and style of flower but are similar in preferring sun to part shade and in being disease- and pest-resistant. There are many different species and cultivars, but a very fragrant species often grown in Virginia is *Viburnum carlesii*, commonly called Koreanspice viburnum. Its red buds open in late March/early April to very fragrant pink-changing-to-white flowers.

*Viburnum carlesii*: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

## LAWN CARE

- There are excellent [lawn care articles](#) from the Virginia Cooperative Extension. The most important recommendation is to **soil test before applying fertilizer**. A soil test is the only way to determine if the soil needs lime, phosphorus (P) or potassium (K). Apply nutrients as recommended by a soil test and you'll be taking a huge first step towards protecting water quality. See the April 2015 issue of *The Garden Shed* for an article on "[Soil Testing.](#)"
- Check the fertilizer labels to see the percentages of both **WSN (water soluble nitrogen) and WIN (water insoluble N)**. The higher the WIN percentage the more slowly available the N is to the plant by way of chemical and microbial reactions in the soil. Any source containing 50% or more WIN can be safely applied at higher application rates with minimal concern for nutrient leaching.
- **Warm-season grasses** don't initiate much root growth until after shoot greening is complete; therefore, the ideal scenario is to **wait at least until 50-75% green-up before applying N**. Excessive spring N fertilization promotes a lot of shoot growth and can be disastrous to the turf if there is a late freeze.
- **Mow the lawn after it has grown at least two inches**. The roots are being renewed in the spring and grass needs vigorous top growth initially. Set lawn mowers at the highest height

early in the season.

- **Topdress** low spots and **finish overseeding** thin or bare patches.
- **Apply crabgrass preventer before April 15.** Do not apply to areas that will be seeded.
- **Aerate** turf if soil is compacted.

## **PEST MANAGEMENT**

- Inspect boxwoods (*Buxus*) for [boxwood leafminers](#) (Diptera) as new leaves emerge. Look for blistered, puckered tissue on the underside of boxwood leaves.
- Look for tunneling damage in holly (*Ilex*) leaf caused by [holly leafminer](#), a fly maggot (Diptera).
- **Treat azaleas for lacebugs** if they were a problem last year. Look for white flecking on the upper leaf surface.
- **Orange, jelly-like galls on cedar trees** spread [rust diseases](#) to apples, crabapples, and hawthorns. Collect and dispose of cedar-apple galls on junipers and cedar-hawthorn rust on hawthorn leaves and fruit before the orange spore-producing structures emerge from the galls. Immunox is identified as an effective fungicide to protect against rusts. For a discussion of chemical controls, see section 3-6 on Fungicides in the VCE 2017 *Home, Grounds and Animals* publication.
- Destroy or prune off webs of [eastern tent caterpillars](#). Manual methods for removal are usually sufficient. Typical natural controls include birds, predaceous and parasitic insects (especially wasps), and disease organisms. *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt, Dipel or Thuricide) is a safe biological spray if an insecticide is needed and should be applied as soon as the tents appear. Most trees, however, will recover from lost foliage.
- Watch for pests, such as slugs and snails, especially after a cool, wet spring.

## **INVASIVES**

*Alliaria Petiolata*, commonly called **Garlic Mustard**, is a biennial and completes its life cycle in two growing season. First-season plants are ground-hugging rosettes. Second-year plants send up stalks with small white flowers in early spring. As with many invasives, the statistics are discouraging: one plant can produce from 400 to 7,000 seeds. If there is a smaller-sized patch, you can try hand pulling but be aware that there may be other seedlings ready to sprout. Spot-treating with a foliar spray is also an option. See the [Factsheet provided by PRISM](#) for more information on identification and treatment recommendations for garlic mustard and other invasives.

## **WILDLIFE**

Termites are beginning to swarm. Mole young are born in chambers deep underground. If you see a honeybee swarm, notify a local beekeeper to find a new home for these beneficial insects. Hummingbirds return from their winter home in Central America. Wasp and hornet queens begin nesting.



*Alliaria petiolata*: Tony Atkin, Wikimedia Commons



# Blue in the Shade

By Susan Martin | April 2018 - Vol.4 No. 4



Studies have consistently shown that blue is the most preferred color the world over. Based on a 30,000

person survey in 2017 canvassing 100 countries, the world's favorite color was declared to be a particular shade of greenish-blue. In the garden, blue blends pleasingly with different shades of green foliage and can be used effectively in combination with both warm and cool hues.

Although there are many sun-loving blue flowers, it is not as easy to find blue flowers that thrive in shade. The **Boraginaceae (borage) family**, however, gives us several beauties, four of which are described below. In addition to their striking blue color and shade tolerance, **these plants are deer and rabbit resistant as well!**

#### FORGET-ME-NOT

**Myosotis**, commonly called **forget-me-not**, has a beautiful sky-blue flower. Native to Europe, this perennial can also be found throughout eastern and western North America, where it is an introduced species. It grows in many types of habitat, including disturbed areas such as roadsides. It flourishes in organically-rich, consistently moist-to-wet soils in full sun to part shade. In fact, this plant grows so easily that it is **sometimes considered invasive**. *M. scorpioides* spreads by creeping roots, but will also self-seed. The common forget-me-not of borders and woodland gardens is *M. sylvatica*. Although technically a short-lived perennial, this plant is often grown as a biennial by planting seed in the ground in mid-summer for bloom the following year. It is also often grown as an annual by starting seed indoors about 8-10 weeks before the last spring frost date for bloom the same year. Forget-me-not is sometimes subject to mildew and rust. Although this plant offers a beautiful blue, those who want a plant that is not potentially invasive might consider the perennial, *Brunnera macrophylla*, commonly called false forget-me-not.



*Myosotis sylvatica*: Meneerke bloem, Wikimedia Commons

#### BRUNNERA

**Brunnera macrophylla** is commonly called Siberian bugloss or, because of its small forget-me-not flowers of light blue with yellow centers, **false forget-me-not**. The blooms appear in April to May in airy, branched racemes rising well above the foliage on slender stems to 18" tall. The perennial is primarily grown in shady areas for its attractive heart-shaped, dark green, basal foliage. The basal leaves form a foliage mound (1.0'-1.5' by 1.5'-2.5') which remains attractive throughout the growing season. Smaller upper leaves are elliptic.



*Brunnera macrophylla*:Vauban at Polish Wikipedia

*B. macrophylla* grows easily in average, medium moist, well-drained soil in part shade. The plant prefers cool summers and grows best in USDA Zones 3-7. In Virginia, it needs to be protected from bright sun and does best in part-shade or filtered sunlight. **Clumps slowly spread** by creeping **rhizomes**, persistent underground stems that store energy collected during the plant's brief growing season. Plants may self-seed in optimum growing conditions, but seedlings of variegated forms may not come true (may lose variegation). Remove ragged foliage in late fall and snip off the spent flower stalks in early summer to keep this plant looking its best. Divide plants in spring or start seeds in a cold frame in early spring. Slugs and snails can sometimes be a problem.

### Brunnera Cultivars

- 'Jack Frost' grows in a mound (1.0'-1.5' by 1.0'-1.5'). Its distinctive silvery white leaves have green primary and secondary veins and a thin green rim around the leaf edges. Its bright blue forget-me-not flowers add dazzle to the garden in spring, and the silvery leaf sheen continues to brighten shaded spots throughout the season. This cultivar is the 2012 Perennial Plant Association's Plant of the Year and is prized for its improved tolerance of heat and sun.
- 'Looking Glass' is a **sport** of the cultivar *B. macrophylla* 'Jack Frost' and grows to a little more than a foot tall and almost as wide. 'Looking Glass' is distinguished from 'Jack Frost' by having less green-veining on its heart-shaped leaves as they mature to an almost glowing silver color. Delicate blue flowers emerge in spring. Drought tolerant once established, this cultivar requires little watering and is fairly resistant to pests.

### What is a sport?

In the plant world, a sport is a genetic mutation resulting from a faulty chromosomal replication. This causes a segment of the plant to be distinctly different from the parent plant in both appearance (phenotype) and genetics (genotype). The genetic change is not a result of unusual growing conditions; it is an accident, a mutation. In many cases the new trait can be handed down to the organism's offspring.



*B. macrophylla* 'Looking Glass': Terranova Nurseries

## LUNGWORT

Another beautiful spring bloomer that thrives in shade to part-shade is ***Pulmonaria***, commonly called **lungwort**. This plant has been christened with a variety of other colorful names including: Bethlehem sage, Jerusalem cow lip, spotted dog, and soldiers and sailors. Hailing from a native range encompassing much of Europe and into Russia, lungwort is sensitive to toxins, and so is typically found in unpolluted areas. Lungworts are promiscuous plants that self-pollinate and hybridize. As a result, there are many named cultivars, often with little to tell them apart. Because so many similarities exist, extending to plants in the wild, botanists' calculations of the number of species in existence vary from 12-18 species. ***P. officinalis*** (the second word indicates medicinal use) has been one of the most commonly used species in cottage gardens. Many of the newer hybrids exclude this species because it is so mildew-prone.



*Pulmonaria officinalis*: Pharoah Hound at the English language Wikipedia

The rough leaves, covered with hairy fuzz, are spotted, speckled, or blotched with silver. This striking coloration continues to add interest after the spring bloom has ended. Flower buds are usually pink, while the funnel-shaped flowers turn to blue, purple, pink, red or white after they mature, adding a flashy, two-toned color effect to the flower clusters. There are many newer cultivars and hybrids, such as 'Apple Frost' (rose-colored flowers that fade to violet-blue), 'Trevi Fountain' (large royal-blue flowers), and 'Raspberry Splash' (raspberry-pink flowers). Lungwort does best in shady or semi-shady conditions, requiring more moisture as the light increases. It tends to wilt in afternoon sun and may even go dormant during a drought. Ideally, it enjoys a moist, well-drained spot in the garden, with a little early morning sun but protection from hard, afternoon sun. Amending the garden soil with compost increases moisture retention and improves plant growth. When happy, lungwort spreads easily through rhizomes. It will also self-seed, although as is typical of hybrid origins, seedlings are not always similar in appearance to the parents. Plants can be divided in early spring or in fall. The leaves attract slugs, who apparently don't mind a little rough fuzz on their salad greens! Powdery mildew might also be a problem in hot, humid conditions. Cut off the flowers after they're done blooming, and trim back the leaves as they begin to decline. It is good practice to dispose of the leaves rather than adding them to the compost heap due to their susceptibility to mildew. This pruning will help revive the plant as it flags in the heat of midsummer.

How did such a beautiful plant acquire such an unusual name? The genus *Pulmonaria* comes from the Latin word for lung, *pulmo*. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a theory known as the Doctrine of Signatures purported that plants resembling certain human physical attributes were beneficial to the part of the body they resembled. This was a widely accepted theory, and people thought that the leaves of the lungwort resembled diseased lung tissue. The leaves were boiled like a tea and used to treat bronchial infections and pulmonary diseases.

## VIRGINIA BLUEBELLS

***Mertensia virginica*, Virginia bluebells**, is a hardy, early spring-flowering perennial native to North American moist woodlands. Other common names include: Virginia-cowslip, Roanoke-bells, and oysterleaf.



*Mertensia virginica*, Virginia Bluebells:  
Catie Drew

This erect, clump-forming plant grows 1-2' tall and has delicate, terminal clusters of light pink buds that open to flared, trumpet-shaped blue flowers. As early as 1776, Thomas Jefferson noted in his garden book "a bluish colored, funnel-formed flower in lowgrounds in bloom." The flowers contain five petals fused into a tube, five stamens, and a central pistil (carpel). The stamens and stigma are spaced too far apart for self-fertilization. The funnel-shaped flower attracts long-tongued bees, sphinx moths, butterflies and ruby-throated hummingbirds. Both the stems and the leaves of Virginia bluebells are smooth, while most borage family members have hairy leaves. The gray-green, oval, somewhat floppy leaves grow 6-8" long and die back to the ground when the woodlands start to leaf out. Because the plant goes dormant, it should be overplanted with annuals or used in conjunction with ferns and hostas and other shade-loving perennials that will expand as the growing season progresses.

Virginia bluebells grow and spread from rhizomes; the plants will also self-sow in spots where they are growing well. For introducing the plant in your garden, sow seed in either spring or fall, or plant nursery transplants in early spring. Plants can be divided after the leaves start to die back in the spring, or they can be divided in fall if you remember to mark their location before they go dormant. As in their native habitat, they need a humus-rich soil, adequate moisture in spring, and sun before the trees leaf out. A dry habitat in summer suits them fine since they go dormant. Their fleshy rhizomes will rot in a poorly drained soil that stays boggy year-round. Although bluebells don't attract rabbits, **deer sometimes browse on the foliage.**

**NOTE:** There is another early-spring plant called bluebells, ***Hyacinthoides hispanica***, also known as wood hyacinths or Spanish bluebells, of the family **Asparagaceae**. Grown from bulbs, these plants produce clumps of strappy leaves and very pretty blue bell-shaped flowers along tall, sturdy stems. These perennials are not native, and multiply rapidly, sometimes into unplanned or undesired places. The plant **has been categorized as an invasive** by the Exotic Management Team of the National Park Service.

## DWARF CRESTED IRIS



*Hyacinthoides hispanica*:  
Wikimedia Commons



*Iris Cristata*; Kid Cowboy, Wikimedia Commons

Now we'll leave the Boraginaceae family and consider *Iris Cristata*, commonly called **Dwarf Crested Iris**, of the family **Iridiceae**. This low-growing, rapidly spreading plant is native to North America. It typically grows to 3-6" tall and features pale blue, lilac, or lavender iris flowers with gold crests on the falls. Flowers are borne on very short stems, often appearing nearly stemless. Narrow, sword-shaped, yellowish-green to medium green leaves about 6" long provide an attractive ground cover. The plant spreads quickly through a network of branching rhizomes and forms dense colonies in optimum growing conditions. This is an excellent plant for early spring bloom in a shaded area of the rock garden, perennial border or woodland garden. Conditions should mimic its native setting: somewhat acidic, well-drained, humusy, moist soil in shade to partial shade. Although it can also tolerate some sun, more moisture is required in that setting. Soil that is too rich will promote excessive vegetative growth. When in flower, a well-developed bed can produce a spectacular drift of violet-blue color. It is easily grown from bulbs planted in the fall, or it can be divided in the fall once the foliage turns yellow. As with other bulb plants, dividing the rhizomes every few years will reduce overcrowding and help to invigorate the plants. The plant is a good nectar source for bees and hummingbirds. **It is deer resistant**, but monitor for damage from slugs and snails.

## SUMMARY

The Boraginaceae family offers several blue-flowered, spring-blooming perennials that thrive in shade and are deer and rabbit resistant (with the exception of Virginia bluebells). Some also offer interesting foliage after the flowers fade. *Iris cristata* of the Iridiceae family offers a striking blue flower, deer resistance, and shade tolerance. With such desirable characteristics, any or all of these specimens could be excellent additions to brighten the spring shade garden!

## SOURCES

[www.plantdelights.com/collections/blue-flowers](http://www.plantdelights.com/collections/blue-flowers)

"*Brunnera microphylla*," [www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/](http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/)

"Why Blue Is the World's Favorite Color," [www.artsy.net/editorial](http://www.artsy.net/editorial)

"Plant Evaluation Notes: An Appraisal of *Pulmonaria* for the Garden," [www.chicagobotanic.org](http://www.chicagobotanic.org)

"Shade Gardening with Colorful Foliage," [www.chicagobotanic.org/colorful\\_foliage](http://www.chicagobotanic.org/colorful_foliage)

"*Pulmonaria officinalis*," [www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder](http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder)

"Plant Sport Mutations - What Does It Mean When A Plant "Throws A Sport," [www.gardeningknowhow.com/plant-sport-mutations](http://www.gardeningknowhow.com/plant-sport-mutations)

"*Mertensia virginica*," [www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder](http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder)

<http://www.lewisginter.org/virginia-bluebells/>

<http://vnps.org/wildflowers-of-the-year/1989-virginia-bluebells/>

<http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/woodland/plants/bluebells.htm>

"*Iris cristata*," [www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/iris cristata](http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/iris%20cristata)

"Iris Cristata," Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, [wildflower.org/ iris cristata](http://wildflower.org/iris%20cristata)

"Iris cristata, dwarf crested iris," Northern Virginia Master Gardeners, [mgnv.org/plants/ground-cover/iris-cristata](http://mgnv.org/plants/ground-cover/iris-cristata)

# Choosing the Right Trees for Your Yard

By Cathy Caldwell | April 2018 - Vol.4 No. 4



Eleven years ago when I stood on the corner and looked at our new home from 100 yards away, the old/new house looked orphaned. The two ancient oaks, the English walnut, two of the silver maples and most of the shrubs had disappeared in the 60 years of neglect that had occurred since I first saw it as a child. At that time, the old place had belonged to my grandmother. So, I wanted trees both for sentimental reasons and to spruce up the old farmstead. This is an account of what I wish I had known about trees and landscaping before I started planting.

Two confessions: I'm an amateur gardener, neither a landscaper nor an arborist. My experience was initially guided by emotional attachments and a budget constrained by the expensive renovations necessary for the house itself. Thus, I made mistakes by not doing enough homework and preparation. Perhaps this article can help you avoid wasted time and energy if you are landscaping a bare parcel of land or re-working an existing yard. Let's approach the job by asking what you need from trees; then we'll address what the trees need from you.

## What can trees do for you?



Most of us experience our trees as complementing our yards and homes; or not. Because of their size, trees define our property by focusing attention on the house and often by hiding less appealing aspects of the scene. By walking around your site, both close-up and from a distance, you can decide what to show off and what to hide. Personal preferences for privacy or drama will make a difference about where to plant in relation to entrances, windows, and the street. For example, a lengthy driveway bordered by maples casts an enchanted shadow in summer and beckons the visitor through bare branches in winter.

You may need shade on your southern exposure, or a sunny spot for vegetables or flowers. This is the time to consider what kind of gardening you want to do near these trees. If you are a vegetable or flower gardener as I am, you will want beds that need at least 6 hours of sun both for vegetables and for many blossoming plants; other ornamentals manage with partial shade or full shade. Evergreens provide shade in all seasons and can have either needles (e.g., pine, spruce) or leaves (e.g., magnolia, holly). Ideally, you would watch the movement of the sun for twelve months. More likely, you can note the four points of the compass around your property in order to surmise where the sunniest and shadiest spots will be year-round. Remember: trees may grow slowly, but they do get much larger than the specimens you will install. An arborist has the equipment to bring in huge trees for instant effect, but at considerable cost. Plan for both the next couple of years and for the length of time you expect to live there. A common mistake in a homegrown landscape is to plant too close to permanent structures which often means future pruning or removal as your trees grow. In ten years even a beautiful tree can pose the danger of falling on the house.

## What do trees need from you?

Before you begin choosing trees, do a soil test, taking samples from representative parts of the lot. Results from Virginia Tech will tell you what kind of soil you have and what amendments may be necessary for success with the trees you want. As you later study and shop for various specimens, you will learn which ones tolerate all soils and which are more particular. The test results provide your baseline. Because of their size and roots, amending the soil needs to be done before planting trees. Note the slope and drainage in your land. While most trees do best in well-drained soil, some like wet feet (e.g., willows, cypress) while others prefer dry conditions (e.g., chinquapin, bear oak).

The above considerations are the hard part of planning because they involve some unknowns and contingencies we can't always control. Learn about what you can control by the placement of trees. Next comes the fun of imagining how the plants we see in nurseries and catalogs will decorate your own place.

## What do you want your trees to look like?

Height and the spread of your tree's crown are fundamental descriptions of a mature tree worth

thinking carefully about. We wanted a relatively quick fix to the barren appearance around our new home. A friend offered me tulip poplar saplings three and four feet tall from their woods. I knew they would grow fast, so I planted them some distance away. Ten years later, at 25 feet tall, they define a perennial bed across the driveway from the house. At about the same time I bought some smaller oak switches from the Virginia Forestry Service that grow much more slowly. Some of them are just now reaching the height of those original poplars while others have reached 10-12 feet. As a general rule, trees transplanted from the wild will have less success than those from a nursery.

Give some thought to the size and shape you want to see in the long term. A tall, conical shape like a pin oak can add a sense of height to a single story home. By contrast, generously spreading trees such as white oak or maple can eventually nestle the largest house in its arms. This is the time also to decide between evergreen and deciduous. Again, height and spread will vary with your choices.

Generations of experimentation have given us more alternatives even within the same species. Japanese maples mature in height from three to 20 feet while the hedge maple can soar to 75 feet. One variety will turn from green to brown in fall while a cultivar sports a brilliant yellow or red in October. A few minutes research now saves trouble and expense later. Check out *Dirr's Hardy Trees and Shrubs* in the references below for handy charts on size, shapes and other features.



Because of their bulk, trees can dominate a landscape with a variety of colors and textures that change with the season. Summer leaves may be different shades of green ( such as pale willow or dark oak leaves) , or turn spectacularly in the fall. The wine color of native dogwood leaves will linger into winter. Bark which becomes more evident in winter can be shaggy or smooth ( two kinds of hickory), peeling (birches), mottled (sycamore), light (paper birch) or dark (dogwood).



Blossom color appeals to everyone. The Kwanzan cherry's large pink blooms catch the eye in April before green leaves appear; finally, the leaves spread their yellow-red carpet on the lawn in November. Of course the pristine white magnolia flowers of summer delight southerners. Michael Dirr's book describes the colors and their seasons.

A reminder: the evolutionary purpose of those flowers is usually the production of fruit and/or nuts. So it pays to inquire about the product, if any, your tree will leave behind. Some crabapples will blanket the ground with sour, fermenting fruit. Female ginkgos with their brilliant yellow leaves drop a smelly mess, though for this reason, most nurseries sell only the males. Walnut and gum trees with indistinct flowers deposit an abundance of round nut casings that make walking difficult. The Osage orange tree drops softball-size green fruit.

Spending time with catalog pictures, the information from the websites of botanical gardens and extension services can ignite and guide your imagination. Homework pays off before expending money and energy. A wise choice now gets better over time.

### **The Business of Choosing**

The proverbial guide for gardeners holds true especially for trees because they are a long term investment: "The right tree for the right place." Don't be afraid to listen to your heart, but also pay attention to a few practicalities in your head. Three constants are always worth considering: size, leaves, and habit. Smaller lots in cities and suburbs have encouraged nurseries to develop a range of sizes. Starting with those three constants will help narrow down your choices and improve the chance you'll still love your decision in the years to come.

People who plant trees are looking to the future. We can envision not only a lovely landscape, but one that feeds birds, butterflies and squirrels (and even acorns for the rapacious deer in Piedmont Virginia). We may want to leave something beautiful for our children to enjoy. Native plants are popular and often out-perform exotic species. A few trees produce substances that make certain other plants very difficult to grow near them, walnut and hickories being the prime native examples. Check the VCE publication in the Sources list below for compatible plantings, especially with walnuts.

Your soil test will tell you what amendments, if any, are needed for your top choices. Cross check those results with the requirements for light, moisture, pH and soil type for the trees that you imagine in your yard. Non-profit and educational websites such as Virginia Tech and the Missouri Botanical Garden generally offer more factual information about a particular species than we often see on the nursery tag. Some problems are fixable by adding amendments to your soil. Others, such as moist ground near a stream are not. Sunshine only comes from one source. Most of us rely on rain to provide enough water for our trees once we've gotten them past the first year; and we depend upon the lay of the land to drain that water

where the plant needs it.

Adding a tree or a small grove of trees will increase the appeal of your home to you and your neighbors. And it lasts.

#### SOURCES:

*Dirr's Hardy Trees and Shrubs, An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Michael A. Dirr, Timber Press, 1997). Brief descriptions with pictures and recommendations from an acknowledged expert. A series of charts in the back usefully describe height, color, and other characteristics.

"Selecting Landscape Plants: Shade Trees." Diane Relf and Bonnie Appleton.  
[https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs\\_ext\\_vt\\_edu/426/426-610/426-610\\_pdf.pdf](https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/426/426-610/426-610_pdf.pdf). A helpful chart of characteristics and a valuable description of appropriate trees.

Missouri Botanical Garden. [www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/](http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/) Reliable and readable scientific resource for many trees and plants.

"Landscaping and Gardening Around Walnuts and Other Juglone Producing Plants," [Pa.StateExt.psu.edu](http://Pa.StateExt.psu.edu). Valuable for yards with walnuts and hickories especially

*Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping: Chesapeake Bay Watershed* (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2012). Includes a section on natives with their characteristics, growing conditions, habitat, etc. as well as helpful references.

#### **For information about specific species, see the following from *The Garden Shed*:**

"Fringetree — Slow to Bloom but Worth the Wait," by Pat Chadwick, May 2017-Vol 3. No.5; [pmgarchives.com/article/fringetree](http://pmgarchives.com/article/fringetree)

"Winterberry Holly," by Pat Chadwick, December 2015-Vol.1 No.12; [pmgarchives.com/article/winterberry-holly](http://pmgarchives.com/article/winterberry-holly)

"Sweetbay Magnolia," by Pat Chadwick, November 2015-Vol.1 No.11; [pmgarchives.com/article/sweetbay-magnolia](http://pmgarchives.com/article/sweetbay-magnolia)

"Eastern Redbud Tree," by Pat Chadwick, March 2015 - Vol. 1 No. 3; <https://pmgarchives.com/article/eastern-redbud-tree/>

"Colorful Native Hardwoods for the Landscape," by David K. Garth, March 2015 - Vol. 1 No. 3; [pmgarchives.com/article/colorful-native-hardwoods](http://pmgarchives.com/article/colorful-native-hardwoods)

# In The Vegetable Garden – April

By Cleve Campbell | April 2018 - Vol.4 No. 4

April vegetable gardening in central Virginia can be like a trip to the casino; your luck can change in an instant. We can reasonably expect warm, sunny weather and spring showers — perfect for starting the gardening season. However, a sharp cold front can change everything, bringing in freezing temperatures and on occasion even a late snowfall. Adding to the temptation of April, many of the local nurseries, hardware, and big box stores begin rolling out those beautiful tomato, pepper and eggplant seedlings, just waiting to be rescued and transplanted into the warm April soil. It's hard to resist, but remember: the **average** last killing frost in our area is [May 10 - May 15](#). Now if you are truly tempted to get a jump start on the race to have a vine-ripened tomato by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, remember that the month of April is unpredictable; you can limit your risk by planting only what you are willing to lose and by being prepared to cover/protect your plants should a late killing frost visit your garden. April in our area is a month for planting cool season crops. We have to wait for the arrival of May before planting our warm season crops.

Following is the April vegetable-planting schedule adapted from the [VCE Publication 426-331](#). If you want to identify transplants that can be planted outdoors this month, look for the vegetables marked with an asterisk.

April 1-11	April 12-18
Asparagus	Beets
Beets	Broccoli*
Broccoli*	Brussels Sprouts*
Brussels Sprouts*	Cabbage*
Cabbage*	Chinese cabbage*
Chinese cabbage*	Carrots
Carrots	Cauliflower*
Cauliflower*	Swiss Chard
Swiss Chard	Collards
Collards	Leeks
Leeks	Lettuce, Bibb
Lettuce, Bibb	Lettuce, leaf
Lettuce, leaf	Mustard
Mustard	Potatoes
Onions set)	Onions set)
Potatoes	Potatoes
Radishes	Radishes
Spinach	Spinach
April 19-25	April 26- May 2
Beans, Bush	Beans, Bush

Beans, Pole	Beans, Pole
Beans, Wax	Beans, Wax
Beets	Broccoli*
Broccoli*	Brussels Sprouts*
Brussels Sprouts*	Cucumbers
Cabbage*	Swiss Chard
Swiss Chard	Cucumbers
Cucumbers	Eggplant*
Lettuce, Bibb	Muskmelons
Lettuce, leaf	Onions set)
Onions set)	Peppers*
Pumpkins	Pumpkins
Squash, Summer	Squash, Summer
Squash, Winter	Squash, Winter
Watermelon	Sweet Corn
	Sweet Potatoes
	Tomatoes*
	Watermelon

\* Denotes Transplants

The suggested dates may vary for different areas.

Adapted from “Vegetable Planting Guide and Recommended Planting Dates,” [VCE Publication 426-331](#)

**There’s still time.** Tomato, eggplant, and peppers can still be started indoors from seeds.

April is the time to set out cool-weather crops such as **broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, lettuce and onions.** But we have to wait until the danger of frost has passed to **transplant tender plants** such as tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant.

Having trouble with **plant markers fading**? I have always had trouble when labeling with a “permanent” marker; it still manages to fade before the end of the gardening season! Several years ago, I found a “paint marker” in a local building supply store that does not fade during the growing season. I also discovered a Sharpie marked “paint” at a local craft store that holds up equally well throughout the growing season.

April is a good time to invest in a **soil thermometer.** The cause of poor seed germination is often cold soil. If the soil is too cold, seeds of some plants will rot before they have a chance to sprout. A chart providing information on soil temperatures for optimum germination of vegetable seeds can be found in [VCE Publication 426-316](#), titled “Seed for the Garden.”

To save space in your garden, you can construct temporary or permanent woven wire “fences,” which will provide vertical support for runner varieties of beans, as well as for cucumbers. Plants can be trained to climb the fences, saving not only space, but also making harvesting easier as the vegetables will be hanging down. For additional information on vertical gardening, see [VCE Publication 426-335](#) “Intensive Gardening Methods.”



**Saving Space:** Snow peas growing up a temporary fence. Note the sequential planting of “pole” Lima beans at base of fence.

One of the most important steps in planting comes before seedlings even get near the garden. This is the process of **hardening off**, or gradually acclimating seedlings to outdoor conditions. These little plants have spent their short lives in a warm, sunny, protected place and won’t fare well if they are not exposed slowly to the elements. **Start the hardening off process about 2 weeks before you intend to plant them outside.** A few days before you are ready to begin hardening plants off, reduce the amount of water you give them, and cease fertilizing until they are planted in the garden. Then put your transplants outdoors in an area where they’ll be protected from the direct sunlight and wind. Leave them out for a few hours and bring them back inside. Repeat this each day, gradually increasing the amount of time they are outside and the degree of exposure to sun and wind. After a week or so, leave the transplants out overnight. If frost threatens, bring the seedlings indoors. Additional information on hardening off can be found at [VCE Publication 426-001](#) titled “Plant Propagation From Seed.”

When transplanting seedlings in **peat pots**, gently tear off the top inch of the pot; the upper edges of the pot should be covered with garden soil to avoid wicking water away from the soil surface. Wicking may reduce the amount of moisture available to the roots of the plants.

The **best time to transplant** is on a cool cloudy day or late in the afternoon to avoid the hot sun. The plants then have time to acclimate themselves to their new environment. If the following day is hot and sunny, a row cover may be used to reduce the stress on the plant. A row cover may also be used to help protect young transplants from a late frost.

**Swiss chard** is a soft-textured, mild-flavored green. It will give repeated harvest from spring until fall because it does not tend to bolt or go to seed in hot weather as does spinach. There are multicolored varieties of Swiss chard: red, yellow, green; not only do they add color to the vegetable garden, they hold up well in flower arrangements. Give it a try this spring.

Don’t be in **too big a hurry** to add mulch to the vegetable garden. Delay organic mulching to allow the soil to warm deeply, but mulch before weeds become established.

**Save The Date!** Join us at the Piedmont Master Gardener **Annual Spring Plant Sale on May 5, 10-2:00 pm** at the IX Complex in Charlottesville.

## **Resources:**

Adapted from “Monthly Horticulture Tip Sheets,” Albemarle County Extension Office website, Horticulture &

Natural Resources, [albemarle.ext.vt.edu/programs/horticulture-natural-resources](http://albemarle.ext.vt.edu/programs/horticulture-natural-resources)

# Upcoming Events — April 9: Lecture by Cole Burrell. May 5: Annual Plant Sale

By Cleve Campbell | April 2018 - Vol.4 No. 4



**Lecture by Cole Burrell on April 9 —**

## **“Enhancing the Landscape with Native and Other Grasses”**

Join us for a **free** lecture on **Enhancing the Landscape with Native and Other Grasses**. The lecture will be held on **April 9 at 6:00 pm in Room A**, at the Albemarle County Office Building, located on 5<sup>th</sup> Street Extended at the corner of Old Lynchburg Road and 5<sup>th</sup> Street at 1600 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

The speaker will be **Cole Burrell** who is the owner of Native Landscape Design and Restoration, which specializes in blending nature and culture through artistic design. In 2008 Mr. Burrell received the Award of Distinction from the Association of Professional Landscape Designers for his work promoting sustainable gardening practices. Mr. Burrell worked as curator at the U.S. National Arboretum and the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. He has devoted a lifetime to studying native plants in the wild and in gardens, which led to undergraduate degrees in Botany and Horticulture. He has a **M.S. in Horticulture** from University of Maryland and a **Master of Landscape Architecture** from the University of Minnesota. He is a lecturer in the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Virginia.



**The Lecture is free and open to the public.**

## **SAVE THE DATE -MAY 5—FOR A GREAT PLANT SALE**



Another year of work, passion, and fun is underway for the 2018 Plant Sale. Most of the plants are donated by Master Gardeners from their own gardens. Some perennials are divided and dug up in the fall preceding the spring sale, and are then faithfully tended by volunteers for several months. There were nine organized potting parties this year where Master Gardeners dug up and potted dozens, sometimes hundreds, of plants from a single garden. Including plants from different gardens ensures diversity, and this year's sale offers over 200 different varieties. Some plants, such as tomatoes, peppers, herbs, and annuals, are grown from seed. The Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards are also at the sale, offering expert advice on their always interesting mix of trees, many of which are also nurtured over the winter. In addition, there will be expert tool and knife-sharpening services available on site this year.

Native plants are again a focus of this year's sale, with over 50 varieties available. The sale offers the added benefit of advice on selection and care from enthusiastic Master Gardeners. Volunteers are eager to share their experience and will help select combinations that offer dazzling color in a sunny spot or a serene mixture of pastels for a woodland setting. Or, they will offer advice on choosing plants that attract pollinators or choosing plants that don't attract deer. It's fun to share information with people who share your passion, and both customers and volunteers enjoy the morning.

The sale requires many months of planning and work by at least 90 Master Gardener volunteers. But the proceeds are then available for projects that benefit the community. That's the really important part of the fun—being able to fund an array of Master Gardener projects such as: school garden clubs; horticultural courses as part of a re-entry program at the Albemarle-Charlottesville Regional Jail; demonstration gardens at the Senior Center and Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital; *The Garden Shed* online community newsletter; the Garden Basics program, which offers classes for beginner gardeners; Spring Lecture Series, which offers evening horticultural presentations to the public; Healthy Virginia Lawns, which promotes Best Management Practices in lawn care; and a Horticulture Help Desk, open to telephone and email inquiries five mornings a week from mid-March to mid-October, and at least two mornings a week the rest of the year. In 2017, PMG made a \$5,000 grant to the McIntire Botanical Garden project and gave educational horticultural grants to 16 Charlottesville/Albemarle schools. The Plant Sale is an important source of funding for all these projects.

So, when you get the itch this spring to dig in the dirt and watch things grow, remember that there have

been industrious Master Gardeners already hard at work, ready to offer plants, advice, and contagious enthusiasm at their Spring Sale!

**SET ASIDE SATURDAY, MAY 5, 2018 TO JOIN US AT Ix PARK, SECOND STREET SE AND ELLIOTT AVENUE, DOWNTOWN CHARLOTTESVILLE, FROM 10:00 A.M. TO 2:00 P.M. WE ARE OFFERING A LONGER SALE TIME WITH A LATER START TO ACCOMMODATE FAMILIES BUSY WITH SATURDAY MORNING ACTIVITIES. JOIN US! IT'S A GREAT EVENT FOR A GREAT CAUSE—AND YOU'LL FIND GREAT PLANTS!**

# Baby Bok Choy, Sautéed and Steamed

By Cate Whittington | April 2018 - Vol.4 No. 4



A cruciferous vegetable, the word *bok choy* stems from the Chinese “bai” (white) and “cai” (cabbage



). Nutrient-rich, bok choy is believed to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits.

On a recent visit to Druknya House, the newly-opened Tibetan restaurant in Charlottesville, I ordered the bok choy and was not disappointed. Delicious and tasting of butter, I was unable to ascertain how it had actually been prepared. My personal experience with bok choy had been to sauté or steam it quickly, but I had not achieved the amount of flavor that I experienced at Druknya House, so I began to play around with various recipes. My resulting combination of stir-frying *and* steaming does not include butter, but is packed with low-calorie flavor. By adding leftover tofu with soy-ginger sauce and some brown rice to a helping of this tasty bok choy, I enjoyed a completely satisfying and nutritious meal.

I believe the secrets to the recipe below are two-fold: ONE, begin with a cold pan and TWO, steam briefly after sautéing. A simply delicious side dish.

### *Ingredients*

2 Tablespoons cooking oil

2-3 garlic cloves, sliced

1" knob of ginger, peeled and grated

1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes

4 bunches baby bok choy

Salt to taste

1/4 cup chicken broth or water

Soy sauce or toasted sesame oil, optional

Lemon, cut in wedges

### *Directions*

1. In a cold pan, combine cooking oil with garlic, ginger, and red pepper flakes.
2. As the pan begins to get hot and the ingredients begin to sizzle, add the bok choy all at once. Sprinkle liberally with salt. Brown lightly on one side; turn and brown the other side (total of about 4-5 minutes).
3. Add chicken broth or water to the pan. Cover and steam for about 2 minutes.
4. Remove pan lid and continue to cook until liquid evaporates.
5. Drizzle with soy sauce or toasted sesame oil if desired.
6. Serve with a wedge of lemon for the finishing touch.